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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 001037

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DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2017

TAGS: CU PGOV PHUM PINR PREL

SUBJECT: CRACKDOWN ON YOUTH IN CENTRAL HAVANA

Classified By: COM: Michael E. Parmly: For reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Independent journalist Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva informed several news outlets that between 60 to 70 youths were detained in Central Havana for wearing bracelets with the word "Cambio" ("Change") on them. Leyva has given staff at USINT several contradictory versions of how many people were involved, what precipitated the crackdown and even what days it occurred on. POL officer has been able to confirm only two names of those who were detained. POL officers also could not confirm a reported arrest of an additional 40 persons on charges of dangerousness. In what appears a separate action, security officials took into custody the son of independent trade union activist Aurelio Bachiller. The son, Macdonis Bachiller Pedrosa, was taken out of bed in his home where he was recovering from hernia surgery and beaten by police in jail. He was released on 1 November. Authorities did not file any charges. End Summary

¶2. (C) POL officers interviewed several leading dissidents and independent journalists who had reported a police crackdown on youths occurring on 28 and 29 October. However, none could verify the scope of the actions or even details of what had occurred. The initial source of the story, independent journalist Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva, has at various times stated that the police in central Havana detained 60, 70 or several dozen youths for wearing bracelets with the word "Cambio" on them on either 28, 29 or 30 October. The initial story was that those detained participated in a protest of the elections on Sunday. He has stated that the youth were held from any time between a few hours to more than a day. In a lengthy interview with POL officer Leyva said that on Sunday, October 28, police detained 16 youth between the ages of 14 and 16, for carrying anti-government placards and shouting slogans such as "Down with Fidel". He then said that on Monday and Tuesday police picked up 60 to 70 people mostly between the ages of 20 and 30 in a sweep of the neighborhood of anyone wearing a Cambio bracelet. He stated that the police simply removed the bracelets from some, while others were detained for as long as six to fourteen hours. Leyva provided two names of individuals involved in these activities.

¶3. (C) However, the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation that maintains a list of the names of all those arrested or detained for political reasons could not confirm these detentions. A name given by Leyva, Pavel Copeda Prieto, the nephew of political prisoner Fabio Prieto Llorente, was with his mother, Clara Lourdes, visiting Fabio in Isla de la Juventud and could not be contacted. Noted dissident Roberto de Miranda tried to convince a neighbor of his who was among the detainees to talk to POL officers but this youth, even when told his name would not be used, was too fearful to do so. From the information de Miranda obtained, the youth did not know how many others were detained and he was not certain if those detained were actually wearing a Cambio bracelet.

¶4. (C) Independent trade union activist Aurelio Bachiller and his 22 year old son Macdonis Bachiller Pedroso told POL officer that on 30 October at 11:30 AM 6 security officials dressed in plain clothes arrived at his house in a vehicle with commercial plates. They dragged him out of bed where he was recovering from abdominal hernia surgery performed on 26 October, and brought him to the Zanja jail. Aurelio went to the jail at 2:00 PM and waited until 3:00 AM trying to get information from the officials about his son. A person who was released at 1:00 AM told Aurelio that police beat his son with truncheons when he resisted being put in the cell, information Macdonis confirmed to POL officer. The next day Macdonis called his father and said that he had been brought to two different hospitals and the doctors recommended admitting him but he was sent back to jail because there were no available beds. Macdonis was released on 1 November and to date has not been charged with anything. Macdonis was wearing a Cambio bracelet at the time of his arrest and a state security officer went to Aurelio's home that evening

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stating that the detention was because Macdonis was distributing these bracelets. Aurelio said that this is untrue and that his son is not involved in political activity. Aurelio believes that the actions are in retaliation to Aurelio's recent activities such as praising the Bush speech in a interview for Radio International Miami over the weekend and campaigning against the recent elections. Both Aurelio and his son have been approved for the refugee program and recently asked permission from the Cuban government to leave the island. The state security officer stated that they would not get this permission if either of them caused any more trouble.

¶5. (C) Comment: Although the scope of this crackdown cannot be determined at this point, several dissident professors and journalists gathered at Roberto de Miranda's house state that they see an increase in actions targeting youth. They hear of frequent threats of the use of the law of "dangerousness," which only requires the statement of a police official that someone has an anti-social attitude, to discourage young people from getting politically involved.  
PARMLY